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At Reasonable Prices

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Phone 29

The BALL of FIRE

by GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER and LILLIAN CHESTER
ILLUSTRATED by C.D. RHODES

"I don't see the use of metaphor," retorted the rector, who dealt professionally in it. "Business is business." Allison grunted, and flicked his ashes into the fire.

"By George, you're right," he agreed. "I've been trying to handle you like a church, but now I'm going after you like the business organization you are."

Rev. Smith Boyd reddened. The charge that Market Square church was a remarkably lucrative enterprise was becoming too general for comfort.

"The vestry has given you their decision," he returned, standing stiff and straight, with his hands clasped behind him. "You may pay for the Veder court tenement property a cash sum which, in ten years, will accrue to fifty million dollars, or you may let it alone," and his tone was as forcefully crisp as Allison's, though he could not hide the musical timbre of it.

"I won't pay that price, and I won't let the property alone," Allison snapped back. "The city needs it."

For a moment the two men looked each other levelly in the eyes. There seemed to have sprung up some new enmity between them. A thick man with a stubby mustache came puffing up to the fire, and sat down on his sled with a thump.

"Splendid exercise," he gasped, holding his sides. "I think about a week of it would either reduce me to a living skeleton, or kill me."

"Your vestry's an ass," Allison took pleasure in informing him.

"Same to you and many of them," puffed Jim Sargent. "What's the trouble with you? Trying to take a business advantage of a church?"

"I'd have a better chance with a Jew," was Allison's contemptuous reply.

"Oh, see here, Allison!" remonstrated Jim Sargent seriously. He even rose to his feet to make it more emphatic. "You mustn't treat Market Square church with so much indignity."

"Why not? Market Square church puts itself in a position to be considered in the light of any other grasping organization."

Rev. Smith Boyd, finding in himself the growth of a more unclothed anger, decided to walk away rather than suffer the aggravation which must ensue in this conversation. Consequently, he started down the hill, dragging Jim Sargent's sled behind him for company. There were no further insults to the church, however.

"Jim, what are the relations of the Towando Valley to the L. and C.?" asked Allison, offering Sargent a cigar. "Largely paternal," replied Sargent, and the president of the Towando Valley grinned. "We feed it when it's good and spank it when it cries."

"Hold control of the stock?"

"No, only its transportation," returned Sargent complacently.

"Stock is a good deal scattered, I suppose?"

"Small holdings entirely, and none of the holders proud," replied Sargent. "It starts no place and comes right back, and the shareholders won't pay postage to send in their annual proxies."

"Then the stock doesn't seem to be worth buying," observed Allison, with vast apparent indifference.

"Only to piece out a collection," chuckled Sargent. "I didn't know you were interested in railroads."

"I wasn't a week ago," and Allison looked out across the starry sky to the tree-scaled hills. "With the completion of the consolidation of New York's transportation system, and the building of a big central station, I thought I was through. It seemed a big achievement to gather all these lines to a common center, like holding them in my hand; to converge four millions of people to one point, to handle them without confusion, and to redistribute them along the same lines, looked like a life's work; but now I'm beginning to become ambitious."

"Oh, I see," grinned Jim Sargent. "You want to do something you can really call a job. If I remember right, you started with an equipment of four horse cars and two miles of rusted rail. What do you want to conquer next?"

Allison glanced down the hill, then back out across the starry sky. Some new fervor had possessed him tonight which made him a poet, and loosened his tongue which, previous to this, could almost calculate its utterances in percentage.

"The world," he said.



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"It's about time," agreed his efficient general manager. "I think it's been four years since you stopped to take a breath. Going to play a little?"

"That's the word," and Allison chuckled like a boy.

"I suppose we'll have your address," suggested Gregory.

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build, with a youth's enthusiasm, but with a man's experience, and with the momentum of success and the power of capital. Something had crystallized him in the past few days.

Across the fertile fields and the mighty mountains and the arid deserts of the United States, there angled four black threads, from coast to coast, and everywhere else were shorter main lines and shorter branches, and, last of all, mere fragments of railroads. He began with the long, angling threads, but he ended with the fragments, and these, in turns, he gave minute and careful study. At three o'clock he took a sandwich and ordered his car. He was gone less than an hour, and came back with an armload of books; government reports, volumes of statistics, and a file of more intimate information from the office of his broker. He threw off his coat when he came in this time, and spread, on the big, lion-clawed table at which Napoleon had once planned a campaign, a varicolored mass of railroad maps. At seven-fifteen old Ephraim found him at the end of the table in the midst of some neat and intricate tabulations.

"Time to dress, sir," suggested Ephraim.

"Oh, it's you," remarked the absorbed Allison, glancing up.

"Yes, sir," returned Ephraim. "You told me to come for you at seven-fifteen."

Allison arose and rubbed the tips of his fingers over his eyes.

"Keep this room locked," he ordered, and stalked obediently upstairs. For the next thirty minutes he belonged to Ephraim.

He was as carefree as a boy when he reached Jim Sargent's house, and his eyes snapped when he saw Gail come down the stairs, in a pearl-tinted gown, with a triple string of pearls in her waving hair and a rose-colored cloak depending from her gracefully sloping shoulders.

Her own eyes brightened at the sight of him. He had been much in her mind today; not singly but as one of a group. She was quite conscious that she liked him, but she was more conscious that she was curious about him. He stepped forward to shake hands with her and, for a moment, she found in her an inclination to cling to the warmth of his hand. She had never before been so aware of anything like that. Nevertheless, when she had withdrawn her hand, she felt a sense of relief.

"Hello, Allison," called the hearty voice of Jim Sargent. "You're looking like a youngster tonight."

"I feel like one," replied Allison, smiling. "I'm on a vacation." He was either vain enough or curious enough to glance at himself in the big mirror as he passed it. He did look younger; astonishingly so; and he had about him a quality of lightness which made him restless. He had been noted among his business associates for a certain dry wit, scathing, satirical, relentless; now he used that quality agreeably, and when Lucile and Ted, and Arly and Dick Rodley joined them, he was quite easily a sharer in the gaiety. At the theater he was the same. He participated in all the repartee during the intermissions, and the fact that he found Gail studying him, now and then, only gave him an added impulse. He was frank with himself about Gail. He wanted her, and he had made up his mind to have her. He was himself a little surprised at his own capacity of entertainment, and when he parted from Gail at the Sargent house, he left her smiling, and with a softer look in her eyes than he had yet seen there.

Immediately on his return to his library, Allison threw off his coat and waistcoat, collar and tie, and sat at the table.

"What is there in the icebox?" he wanted to know.

"Well, sir," enumerated Ephraim carefully: "Mrandy had a chicken potpie for dinner, and then there's—"

"That will do; cold," interrupted Allison. "Bring it here with as few service things as possible, a bottle of Vichy and some olives."

He began to set down some figures, and when Ephraim came, shaking his head to himself about such things as cold dumplings at night, Allison stopped for ten minutes, and lunched with amaranth relish. At seven-thirty he called Ephraim and ordered a cold plunge and some breakfast. He had been up all night, and on the map of the United States there were pencilled two thin straight black lines, one from New York to Chicago, and one from Chicago to San Francisco. Crossing them, and paralleling them, and angling in their general direction, but quite close to them in the main, were lines of green and lines of orange; these three.

Another day and another night he spent with his maps, and his books, and his figures; then he went to his broker with a list of railroads.

"Get me what stock you can of these," he directed. "Pick it up as quietly as possible."

The broker looked them over and elevated his eyebrows. There was not a road in the list which was important strategically, but he had ceased to ask questions of Edward Allison.

(To be continued)

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Skin Muddy?
Dull eyes, blotches and other skin blemishes result from a disordered digestion. Purify the blood, tone the stomach, gently stimulate the liver and regulate the bowels and bile with

BEECHAM'S PILLS
Largest Sale of Any Medicine in the World. Sold everywhere. In boxes, 10c, 25c.

Was It Chilly

In Your Bedroom This Morning?

Of Course It Was. You Were Shaking While You Dressed

Gas Heaters Kill the Chill

Heat Where You Want It When You Want It Quickly—at turn of a valve

Order Up a Gas Heater. Light it a few moments and the Room is Comfortable.

Prices: \$1.50 to \$10.00

Bisbee Improvement Company

The Theater

MUTT & JEFF IN COLLEGE.

All positively new!—is the most important announcement regarding Mutt & Jeff in College, for the coming season. As the title signifies, it has the college environment from start to finish, and is certainly one continuous "Scream" of laughter from curtain to curtain. To begin with, the characters are all new with the exception of our heroes, Mutt & Jeff themselves. They also are in a new atmosphere entirely. You can imagine how funny it will be to see Bud Fisher's two eccentric characters as students. The story of the play deals with the students of a popular university where there was a scarcity of football players among the regular enrolled students. In order to strengthen the team Mutt & Jeff were induced to take an elementary course in college in order to secure their services on the football team. One can well imagine the good comedy that can be produced from this plot. You can depend upon it that there will be nothing lacking to make the best Mutt & Jeff show Gus Hill has ever offered. However, you can judge for your self at the Orpheum next week.

"NEAL OF THE NAVY"
The last episode of "Neal of the Navy" the great American serial, will be shown at the Lyric today. This serial has had a tremendous run of popularity here and in deference to many requests the Lyric's management has secured "The Black Box," a new serial equally as popular which will be shown every Friday commencing next week.

"The Black Box" is a thirty reel serial in fifteen episodes and is now running in some of the big cities. That this serial will be well received by the Lyric's patrons goes without saying.

YOU'RE BILIOUS! LET "CASCARETS" LIVE! LIVER AND BOWELS

Don't Stay Headachy, Constipated, Sick, With Breath Bad and Stomach Sour

Get a 10-cent box now.

You men and women who can't get feeling right—who have headache, coated tongue, bad taste and foul breath, dizziness, can't sleep, are bilious, nervous and upset, bothered with a sick, gassy, disordered stomach, or have a bad cold.

Are you keeping your bowels clean with Cascarets, or merely forcing a passageway every few days with salts, cathartic pills or castor oil?

Cascarets work while you sleep; cleanse the stomach, remove the sour, undigested, fermenting food and foul gases; take the excess bile from the liver and carry out of the system all the constipated waste matter and poison in the bowels.

A Cascaret to-night will straighten you out by morning—a 10-cent box from any drug store will keep your stomach sweet, liver and bowels regular, and head clear for months. Don't forget the children. They love Cascarets because they taste good—never gripe or sicken.—Advertisement.

Miss Frances Hall as a Spanish senorita.

Miss Frances Hall was a belle of Baltimore, Maryland, before she went to Coronado Beach, California, with her sister, Mrs. Mary W. Hill, wife of Lieutenant Hill, commanding the U. S. torpedo boat Paul Jones, now in Mexican waters. Miss Hill will take a prominent part in the Spanish ball to be given at Coronado Beach on the evening of January 29, and the photograph shows her in the costume which she will wear on the occasion.